

We Claim:

1. A switch assembly for a medical diagnostic instrument, said instrument including a handle containing at least one battery and including a lamp assembly having at least one electrical contact, said switch assembly including:

at least one movable member engagable with at least one of said at least one battery and said lamp assembly to move one of said at least one battery and said lamp assembly from a first position in which said electrical contact and said batteries are in electrical connection and a second position in which a spacing is formed between said battery and said electrical contact of said lamp assembly.

2. A switch assembly as recited in Claim 1, wherein said switch assembly is a single plastic injection molded part.

3. A switch assembly as recited in Claim 1, wherein said at least one movable member is a lever including an exterior portion that is accessible to a user.

4. A switch assembly as recited in Claim 3, wherein said lever is pivotally disposed between the top of said at least one said battery and the electrical contact of said lamp assembly.

5. A switch assembly as recited in Claim 3, wherein said at least one battery is biasedly positioned within said handle to engage said electrical contact, said lever being applicable to overcome the biasing force to relocate said at least one battery a predetermined distance from the electrical contact of said lamp assembly.

6. A switch assembly as recited in Claim 1, wherein said at least one movable member includes an angled surface, said movable member

being movable so as to move said angled surface between the top of said at least one battery and the electrical contact of said lamp assembly to selectively create a gap therebetween.

7. A switch assembly as recited in Claim 1, wherein said at least one battery is biased into electrical connection with said electrical contact by a spring, wherein said movable member acts to counteract the biasing force of said spring.

8. A switch assembly as recited in Claim 1, wherein said instrument includes a pair of vertically stacked batteries.

9. A switch assembly as recited in Claim 1, wherein said movable member is securable in at least one of said positions.

10. A switch assembly as recited in Claim 9, including a detent mechanism for securing said movable member in at least one of said positions.

11. A handheld diagnostic instrument including:
a housing;
at least one battery retained within said housing;
a light source contained within said housing; and
a switch assembly having means for moving at least one of said at least one battery and said light source relative to the other in order to permit selective energization of said light source.

12. An instrument as recited in Claim 11, wherein said light source is a miniature incandescent lamp.

13. An instrument as recited in Claim 11, further includes means for biasing said batteries into electrical contact with said light source.

14. An instrument as recited in Claim 11, wherein said switch assembly includes a movable member that is movable between a first position and a second position.

15. An instrument as recited in Claim 14, wherein said movable member comprises a single injection molded part.

16. An instrument as recited in Claim 14, wherein said movable member comprises a lever having an exterior portion that is operable by a user.

17. An instrument as recited in Claim 16, wherein at least a portion of said lever is pivotally positioned between said battery and said electrical contact of said lamp assembly.

18. An instrument as recited in Claim 17, wherein said lever is retained by a cylindrical band.

19. An instrument as recited in Claim 14, wherein said movable member includes at least one angled section that can be selectively interposed between said battery and said light source.

20. An instrument as recited in Claim 11, wherein said housing includes a handle, said instrument further including a sleeve member that can be placed onto the exterior of said handle.

21. An instrument as recited in Claim 20, including a plurality of sleeve members that can be replaceably attached to said handle.

22. An instrument as recited in Claim 11, including at least one instrument head releasably attachable to said housing wherein said light source is supported in one of said housing and said at least one instrument head.

23. An instrument as recited in Claim 22, wherein said at least one instrument head retains said light source, said switch assembly causing selective movement of said batteries relative to an electrical contact of said light source to cause energization and deenergization thereof after said at least one instrument head is attached to said housing.

24. An instrument as recited in Claim 22, wherein said instrument head is releasably fastened to said housing by a threaded connection and in which said connection causes said instrument head to be secured to said housing in an aligned manner relative to said switch assembly.

25. A handheld diagnostic instrument comprising:
a handle;
an instrument head releasably attached to said handle; and
at least one plastic sleeve member attachable over the exterior of said handle.

26. A diagnostic instrument as recited in Claim 25, wherein said handle is made from a conductive material.

27. A diagnostic instrument as recited in Claim 26, wherein said handle is made using an extrusion process.

28. A diagnostic instrument as recited in Claim 25, including a top cap interconnecting said instrument head and said handle, said top cap being made using a metal die cast process.

29. A diagnostic instrument as recited in Claim 25, wherein said at least one sleeve member is shrink fitted onto said handle.

30. A diagnostic instrument as recited in Claim 25, wherein said at least one sleeve member includes at least one of a graphic and a textual symbol.

31. A method of operating a medical diagnostic instrument, said method including the steps of:

disposing an electrical contact of a lamp assembly of said instrument into electrical connection with at least one retained battery of said instrument; and

selectively moving at least one of said lamp assembly and said at least one battery out of electrical contact with the other.

32. A method as recited in Claim 31, including the additional step of using a mechanical switch to cause the selective movement of said at least one battery and said lamp assembly.

33. A method as recited in Claim 32, wherein said mechanical switch includes a movable member, said movable member being pivotally movable to cause movement of said at least one battery and said lamp assembly.

34. A method for fabricating a diagnostic instrument, said instrument including a handle, an instrument head, and a top cap interconnecting said instrument head to said handle, said method including the steps of;

extruding said handle; and

applying a thin plastic sleeve member onto the exterior of said handle.

35. A method as recited in Claim 34, including the additional step of adding at least one graphic and textual symbol to said sleeve member.

36. A method as recited in Claim 34, including the additional step of fabricating said top cap from a metal die cast process.